AIR ACTION PRIORITY

SECRET
SECURITY INFORMATION
(Security Classification)

DO NOT TYPE IN THIS SPACE

564

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
AMERICAN REPUBLICS
DESP. NO. 181

FROM : EMBASSY, TEGUCIGALPA, BUREAU OF

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

November 5, 1953
DATE

REF :

NOV - 9 1953

For Dept. Use Only	ACTION	DEPT.
	AIP-4	INFO OTHER

SUBJECT: Comments of Colonel Carlos CASTILLO Armas Relative to Guatemalan Political Exiles.

The memorandum of conversation dated October 8, 1953 between officers of the Department (ARA-Mr. Fisher) and Col. Roberto BARRIOS Peña and Lic. Victor GAVIRO Flores has been examined with interest. Col. Carlos CASTILLO Armas and his wife have been residing for some time within a short distance of this Embassy. He seems to have a wide acquaintance with and be on good terms with the diplomatic representatives from the Latin American countries other than Guatemala. For instance, on September 15 he was an invited guest at the somewhat limited reception given by the Costa Rican Ambassador at the Costa Rican Embassy. A photograph published in EL GRAFICO September 26 shows Castillo Armas seated on a sofa at the Costa Rican Embassy on September 15, together with the Ambassadors of Costa Rica, Nicaragua and El Salvador, and the Chargé d'Affaires of Venezuela. That afternoon (Weeka 38, Des.124, Sept. 25, 1953) the Guatemalan Embassy held a reception in honor of Central American Independence to which were invited members of the Foreign Diplomatic Corps and a somewhat motley assemblage of Hondurans identified with the labor movement, the local press, a visiting Guatemalan ball team, and others. While Castillo Armas was not there, neither did high ranking Honduran Government officials put in an appearance. However, the Ambassadors of Costa Rica, Nicaragua and El Salvador and the Honduran Minister of Foreign Affairs received later that evening as ODECA representatives at the Country Club which Col. Castillo Armas with his wife attended. The Panamanian Ambassador at the time was out of the country. Otherwise, the Diplomatic Corps was fully represented with the exception of Guatemala.

On the Panamanian Independence Day, November 3, the Panamanian Ambassador held a stag reception at high noon. President Galvez and Vice President Lozano attended, the Foreign Minister being absent as Chief of the Honduran Special Mission attending the Independence Day celebrations in the Republic of Panama. Col. Castillo Armas was present at the Panama Embassy reception.

The First Secretary of Embassy has been acquainted with Col. Castillo Armas for some time. Prior to the departure for the United States of Lic. Juan ACOSTA Cerna, whom this reporting officer has

ARRandolph/jhm
REPORTER

SECRET
SECURITY INFORMATION

Roschke 2/5/54

ACTION COPY — DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The action office must return this permanent record copy to DC/R [illegible] endorsement of action taken.

X X

DC/R Central Files

This Document Must Be Returned To

714.00/11-553

SECRET EYES ONLY
LOWC
FILED
DEC 1 1953

also known since his assignment to Guatemala in 1944, Cordoba Cerna was asked who, in his judgment and on his departure, would be the most discreet and best informed of the Guatemalan exiles in Honduras as a source of possible factual unbiased information on the activities of the exiles in Honduras without embarrassing them or without prejudicing this Embassy's objective interest. Cordoba Cerna brought Col. Castillo Armas to call on the First Secretary and described him to be the individual in whom he had complete confidence, both as to Castillo Armas' integrity and discretion.

At the Panamanian Embassy reception November 3, Castillo Armas, when asked by the reporting officer as to the present whereabouts of Gen. Miguel YDIGORAS Fuentes, replied: that he is in San Salvador; he had not seen Ydigoras Fuentes since some time in March, but that he is in contact with him. He said Ydigoras Fuentes wants to be identified with any movement that might give him "on a silver platter" the Presidency of Guatemala, but that "Ydigoras Fuentes does not want to fight for it". Asked whether Col. BARRIOS Peña is with Ydigoras Fuentes in Salvador, Castillo Armas said that at the present time Barrios Peña is in the United States, that Barrios Peña is erratic, unstable and unreliable; that by nature, he is 'poco loco". He said that Barrios Peña and Ydigoras Fuentes, in combination with others, wanted him (Castillo Armas) to participate in a plan for an armed rebellion or invasion or both to dispossess President Arbenz and the communist elements in Guatemalan Government circles. Castillo Armas remarked with emphasis that he has no intention of participating in any such venture. He believes that the only way to obliterate communist influences in Guatemala is by military action carefully planned and carefully carried out. He is a professional military man. He has many friends and associates among the Guatemalan military in service and exiled. He considers the top echelon of the armed forces in Guatemala to be loyal to Arbenz and if they are not convinced communists are, at least, fellow travelers and committed to the communist line or confused by it to the extent that they could not be relied upon to participate in any program or operation that had as its objective the over-throw of the Arbenz regime. He thinks the junior officer grades, captains and below, are manifesting some signs of restiveness, but that in the absence of competent direction, substantial resources, and a complete plan of operations, that the chances of an armed revolt succeeding in displacing communism in the Guatemalan Government are remote, and that activities such as Ydigoras Fuentes envisions would, in the absence of the combined factors he mentioned, be reckless adventures, would fail miserably, and even serve to solidify Guatemalan communist entrenchment.

The Department will recall that during the Guatemalan revolution of 1944, which resulted in the over-throw of the Ubico regime, that Gen. Ydigoras Fuentes put in an appearance at our Embassy there divested of all insignia, during the bombardments between

Fortsatanores and San Jose, to offer his services as a "mediator", to be useful as he put it, in any negotiations that might be undertaken to reconcile the difficulties between the revolutionary elements and the then disintegrating Government of President Ubico. The Department's files will undoubtedly reflect this ambiguous and odd presence of Ydigoras Fuentes at our Embassy under the circumstances.

John D. Erwin

cc: Amembassy, Guatemala
LHD